



Shanghai Community International School

上海长宁国际学校

www.scischina.org

To Whom It May Concern:

27 March 2012

As Shanghai Community International School (SCIS) prepared in August of 2011 to complete the final year of our first International Baccalaureate (IB) cohort, a major concern was finding a teacher who would be able to step not only into the rigors of the new program, but adapt to living in China. In Matt Barton we found both!

One of the biggest challenges of being an international English teacher is working successfully with the varying levels of English proficiency of our students. Within the international school system it is not uncommon to have native speakers and emerging English-language learners in the same course. With Matt's guidance and encouragement, the latter moved past their frustrations with the language and were willing to take risks for growth. By utilizing small group discussions, he was also able to help students create clearer and more insightful essays. These strategies were successfully employed not only for his grade nine students, but for the IB A level English juniors and seniors too!

What really I like about Matt's teaching style is that he is always willing to seek growth from all sources, most importantly, his students. With students from around the globe, Matt used the commonality of their situation to instruct. For example, while discussing *The Great Gatsby*, Matt helped the IB junior students make connections between literature and the world. By using the financial situation in China to explore *Gatsby* themes, he helped them to develop an appreciation for the ambiguities in literature and make items relevant and understandable. IB seniors discovered the same practicalities when comparing poets Plath and Frost to rap and hip-hop.

Besides creating engaging lessons and a positive learning environment, his real-world approach was also very effective for the IB and non-IB seniors. Matt encouraged them to move past grades and scores and find purpose in English, especially in making a more personal connection to their writing. This will serve them well as they go on to the next phase of their lives.

In addition to these three courses, Matt also supervised the IB A level self-taught students to ensure they understood and met all deadlines. His persistence was endless and students knew they had a strong supporter in him!

To round out his massive contributions to the IB program, Matt took on the title of IB Extended Essay Coordinator. Under his direction, he helped to create new guidance material and timelines for the current and upcoming students.

For Matt, school is more than what happens in the classroom and as such he gets involved with the school community. He coached both the middle and high school girls' soccer team and was a familiar face at multiple school events as a chaperone and spectator for grades six through twelve.

Although his time in China was short, he will be remembered as a welcome and invaluable member of our English Department for his professionalism and his calm approach to all of life's curveballs. I know that his personality and role as a life-long learner will help him to be successful in any environment. He will truly be missed!



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Sincerely,

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